

**PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (DEFENCE WING)
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‘हर काम देश के नाम’

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Raksha Mantri inaugurates 29 bridges & six roads constructed by BRO across seven States/Union Territories at a cost of Rs 670 crore

The projects to enhance connectivity & defence preparedness and boost socio-economic development in far-flung areas

Govt considers border areas as the face of India; They’re part of our mainstream, not buffer zones: Shri Rajnath Singh

“We’re committed to border area development, keeping in view the nation’s security needs”

“New confidence of ‘New India’: Infrastructure being developed on mountains & troops deployed on hills to ensure people’s safety & help military effectively deal with adversaries”

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh dedicated to the nation 35 infrastructure projects of Border Roads Organisation (BRO), built at a cost of Rs 670 crore, during an event organised at Joshimath-Malari Road in Uttarakhand on January 19, 2024. In his address, the Raksha Mantri commended the BRO for strengthening the border infrastructure of the country and asserted that by constructing roads, bridges etc., the organisation is connecting the far-flung areas with the rest of the nation geographically, while also linking the hearts of the people residing in remote villages with the rest of the citizens.

Shri Rajnath Singh highlighted Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi-led Government’s approach towards border area development which, he said, completely differs from the previous governments. “Other governments did not focus on development of border areas as they considered these zones as the last areas of the country. We, on the other hand, consider border areas as the face of India, which is why we’re ensuring that world-class infrastructure is created in these zones,” he said.

The Raksha Mantri stressed that connectivity is being provided to every border area in the country through roads, bridges and tunnels, describing the work as not only

of strategic importance, but also pivotal for the welfare of the people residing in these regions. "People living near the borders are no less than soldiers. If a soldier protects the country by wearing a uniform, the residents of border areas are serving the motherland in their own way," he said.

Shri Rajnath Singh pointed out that the Government has changed the approach adopted by previous governments that the border areas are buffer zones between the plains and the potential adversary. He emphasised that the present government considers border areas a part of the mainstream and not a buffer zone. "There was a time when border infrastructure development was not given much importance. Governments used to work with the mentality that the people living in the plains are the mainstream people. They were worried that the developments on the border might be used by the adversary. Due to this narrow mentality, development never reached the border areas. This thinking has changed today. Under the leadership of PM Modi, our government is committed to the development of border areas, keeping in view the Nation's security needs. We do not consider these areas as buffer zones. They are a part of our mainstream," he said.

The Raksha Mantri added that the Government's approach shows a new confidence of 'New India', which will not wait for potential adversaries to reach the plains to deal with them. "We are developing infrastructure on the mountains and deploying the troops on hill borders in such a way that it is ensuring the safety of the people there, and helping the military to effectively deal with our adversaries," he said.

Referring to the large migration from border areas in Uttarakhand, Shri Rajnath Singh termed it as a matter of concern. He said the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister are taking the schemes related to infrastructure development to the last person as the aim is to cover the development journey from the seas to the borders.

The Raksha Mantri also drew attention to the increasing number of natural disasters in some border States/UTs, including Uttarakhand, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim in recent years, stating that many experts believe that climate change is the reason behind these incidents. He called climate change as not just a weather-related phenomenon, but a very serious issue related to national security. The Ministry of Defence is taking this very seriously and will seek cooperation from friendly countries in this regard, he added.

Shri Rajnath Singh made special mention of the BRO's contribution in the recent Silkyra Tunnel operation launched to rescue the trapped labourers in Uttarakhand. Commending the BRO personnel, especially women workers, for their tireless hard work during the operation, he congratulated the entire team of General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) for carrying out its duties in the time of crisis. He termed the operation, which witnessed coordinated efforts of National Disaster Response Force, BRO, Indian Air Force and state agencies, as a great example of teamwork.

The Raksha Mantri described the personnel engaged with the BRO - Armed Forces personnel, Permanent Civilian employees and Casual Paid Labourers (CPLs) - as a unique workforce, which strives together to strengthen the border framework. He highlighted the change in the mindset brought out by the Government with respect to the CPLs. "Earlier, only permanent employees were considered part of the organisation; not those hired through outsourcing or those working on a contract/casual basis. Today, this mentality has changed. We believe that it is only through the combined efforts of all can the nation move forward on the path of development. This changed mindset has had a positive impact on CPLs engaged with the BRO. Today, these CPLs believe that the BRO belongs to them as much as it belongs to the Armed Forces personnel and permanent employees," he said.

Listing out the steps taken by the Ministry of Defence to enhance the quality of life and ensure overall well-being of the BRO personnel, including CPLs, and their Next of Kin, the Raksha Mantri stated that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi-led Government recognises the hard work of the people engaged with the organisation. "We have ensured Risk and Hardship Allowance for permanent civilian personnel of BRO at par with the Armed Forces. Ex-gratia compensation of casual laborers has been increased to Rs five lakh from Rs two lakh. Recently, I approved the provision of insurance of Rs 10 lakh for our CPLs. These steps will help in boosting the morale of our Armed Forces personnel, civilian employees and CPLs in BRO," he said.

Out of the 35 projects inaugurated by Shri Rajnath Singh, 29 are bridges and six are roads. Eleven (11) of them are in Jammu & Kashmir; nine in Ladakh; eight in Arunachal Pradesh; three in Uttarakhand; two in Sikkim; and one each in Mizoram & Himachal Pradesh. These projects have been constructed under challenging weather conditions at the most inhospitable terrain. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Shri Pushkar Singh Dhami was also present during the event.

The event was organised on the Dhak Bridge, a state-of-the-art 93-meter long Class 70R bridge over Dhak Nallah, which was inaugurated by the Raksha Mantri on the site. The Dhak Bridge assumes strategic importance as it will provide increased connectivity to the borders and enhance operational preparedness of the Armed Forces. It will also boost the socio-economic development of the region as it is the only road connecting villages from Joshimath to Nitipass. This will not only promote tourism, but also generate more employment opportunities.

The remaining 34 projects, which were e-inaugurated by Shri Rajnath Singh, include Ragini-Ustad-Pharkian Gali Road in J&K. It is a 38.25-km long CL-9 road, which will provide all weather connectivity between Tangdhar and Keren sector, bolstering the operational readiness of the military.

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